



State Representative

# Chris Strow

April 2006

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Legislature ended its 60-day session in March. The session began quickly and never let up. We tackled a number of very important issues in a short amount of time. Although much of what is reported from Olympia can sometimes lean toward the negative, I'm here to report we made progress on many important issues too.

A few of the highlights include legislation we adopted to crack down on sex offenders — a major priority of mine this session. We also adopted comprehensive methamphetamine legislation to rid our communities of this highly addictive and dangerous drug. A disappointment however, is the passage of yet another irresponsible operating budget, one that puts taxpayers at risk of tax increases or cuts in services. Neither are options that should be necessary.

I hope you'll take a few minutes to read my newsletter. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

**Chris Strow**  
State Representative



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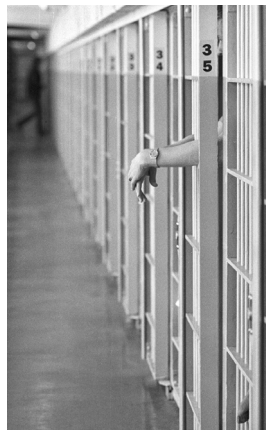
**Committee Assignments:**

- Capital Budget
- Criminal Justice and Corrections
- Economic Development, Agriculture and Trade
- Financial Institutions and Insurance



## Keeping children and families safe from sex offenders...

One of my highest priorities for the 2006 legislative session was to pass legislation to protect the most vulnerable citizens — helpless children — from sex predators. Nothing is more important than keeping our families safe. Both Republican and Democrat law-makers understand the laws have failed to protect children from the dangers of child molesters and child rapists. I was pleased to work in a bipartisan manner to increase penalties for criminals who prey on children and was successful in passing several important bills that will require long-term monitoring for sex offenders.



One of the true successes from the 2006 session is the passage of House Bill 3277, which will protect children from sex predators. This new law will impose stricter sex offender sentences and increase the monitoring of sex offenders, as well as curb the abuse of special sentencing guidelines.

HB 3277 also imposes a 25-year sentence for several offenses against children younger than 15, as well as developmentally disabled people and older, vulnerable adults. Teachers, coaches and clergy are also subject to the sentences, along with treatment, under the measure.

One of the things we didn't accomplish however was cracking down on sex offenders who target their relatives. They are still eligible for dramatically reduced sentences. I believe they should be treated the same as any other sex offender, and based on the phone calls, e-mails and messages I received, there are many victims who feel the same.

Our work is still not done on this issue, and I'll continue to work next year to strengthen the law even more.

## Safer neighborhoods through tougher penalties for methamphetamine production...

The scourge of methamphetamine has become a problem of epic proportions in every part of the state. Not only does it impact meth users and their families, it puts entire neighborhoods at risk of increased crime and environmental damages. I co-sponsored legislation that will increase penalties for methamphetamine production and enhance authority and support for local law enforcement to inspect and shut down meth labs. The legislation also provides funding for treatment to give people addicted to meth the help they need.



## Families welcomed back to Washington state parks...



Families in Washington are fortunate to have the most scenic state parks in the nation in our own backyard. Our park system used to be of the few affordable activities available for families, but it was difficult for some families when parks began charging a day-use fee in 2003 due to budget cuts. I'm pleased to report that we eliminated state park day-use fees this session. Families will now be able to enjoy Washington's beautiful parks without the burden of paying a day-use fee.

## Banning alcohol sales on state-run ferries...



This year I introduced legislation to prohibit the sale of alcohol on our state ferry system. The ferry system is an extension of our state highway system. Banning alcohol sales on our state highways is just common sense. As many as 80% of the passengers on some ferry runs are single occupancy drive-on passengers.

Aside from my primary motivation, protecting public safety, I believe we need to protect our state's taxpayers from liability. Imagine if an already drunk driver bought just one drink on the ferry and caused an accident after leaving the ferry. The personal injury lawyers would target the state as the deep pocket in any suit related to the accident.

Although my bill didn't pass this session, the issue is going to be studied by the State Patrol during the interim, and I'll look to introduce legislation again next session after seeing the results of their study.

## Educational excellence through the WASL...



Washington students should expect a quality education when they graduate from high school. The global nature of today's society and workplace demands it from them. That's exactly why the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) was created by the Legislature a decade ago.

This year's 10th-graders, the class of 2008, are the first students that must pass the WASL to graduate from high school.

We took into account that students process information differently and provided alternative assessments to ensure all students can demonstrate their success. Senate Bill 6475 was adopted, with my support, which allows a student's SAT or ACT scores to be used for the math section of the WASL. Vocational and technical students will be able to submit a sample collection of work, which can be collected from academic, career and technical or remedial courses for review.

Providing students alternative methods to prove they've met the WASL state standards and offering remedial classes, tutors and expanded summer school programs are all excellent steps in ensuring Washington students achieve high academic standards.

## Operating budget spends more than taxpayers can afford...



The state's supplemental operating budget and its unprecedented level of spending was a big disappointment this session. The operating budget is unsustainable and will set taxpayers up for future tax increases.

The purpose of a supplemental budget is to address unanticipated, unmanageable changes in the original budget appropriation. This budget is supposed to be created to fund emergency situations, but instead it includes \$468 million in new or expanded programs. I don't believe that is in the best interest of taxpayers. It's unfair to taxpayers because it spends too much money and saves too little.

Washington citizens have to make tough budgeting decisions every day, and yet the majority party couldn't find a way to adopt a budget that lives within the state's means. I'm concerned with the high level of spending and the low level of saving, and I'm concerned that Washington taxpayers are going to get stuck with the bill next session.

I supported legislation which would create constitutional spending limits and a constitutionally secure rainy-day fund, as well as requiring a 60 percent legislative vote to raise taxes or tap into the secure reserve fund. Unfortunately the majority party didn't support these measures.

Strow's 10th Legislative District office is now open

Now that the session is over we're back in District and settled into our District office. I hope you'll stop by and say hello!

We're located in Oak Harbor at:  
3157 North Goldie Street – Suite 108.  
360-279-1365

